THE WELCOME GUEST.

CHRISTMAS AGAIN.

THROW away cares, and all live in the present;
Youngsters are flirting with laughter and noise;
Christmas indoors is remarkably pleasant—
Dances and games for the girls and the boys.
Outside the shadows are colder—'tis snowing,
Soft flakes whirl downward and drift on the pane.
Round the warm hearth, where the fire is glowing,
Old folks draw closer at Christmas again!

The head of the house, in the glow of the embers,
Stands straight as an arrow, smiling, but grand.
There is his wife, and some fifty Decembers
Leave her as lightly as waves on the sand.
She is to him still as fair as he thought her
When in her teens his allegiance he swore.
Many a son, now, and blossom cheeked daughter
Gather about them for Christmas once more!

Then there are neighbors and cousins and lovers;
Bertie, from college, and stroke of his crew;
Sportsmen who come with an eye on the covers;
Maidens of beauty whose charms are not few
Dainty Dianas of favors quite chary;
Reginald, fresh from the ranch on the plain.
Learned girl graduates, Sallie and Mary,
Meeting and greeting at Christmas again.

Still, to my fancy, the fairest of faces
Yonder is shining in silvery curls,
Framed in soft wrappers and delicate laces,
Grandmother sits in a cluster of girls,
Watching the dancers with eyes growing tender,
Clearer and dearer for long ago pain;
Holding the loving hands near to defend her,
Safe with her children at Christmas again.

I can remember when beaux by the dozen
Toasted her beauty in wit and in wine;
I, too, adored her—though I was a cousin—
Many a sword tried its mettle with mine.
Ah, gallant company, vanished to hades!
Swept with the years till we only remain.
She is for me still the sweetest of ladies—
I, her old suitor, at Christmas again!

Madam, your hand! Though the dancers be plenty,
Let us, too, stand—not in waltz or in reel.
This was "the mode," eighteen hundred and twenty,
When it was voted as "mighty genteel."
Ah, that was dancing. Then "steps" were "de rigueur"
(Not a wild scramble, absurd and insane).
You will remember that elegant figure—
Let us walk through it at Christmas again!

Yes, that is well! Strike a statelier measure,
Fitting the snows and the honor of years.
Say, does it bring to you visions of pleasure,
Or has the music a tremor of tears?
Here let us stay. Why this laughter, young misses?
"Under the mistletoe!" Zounds! then, 'tis plain,
Grandmother, blushing, must bring out those kisses
She has been keeping for Christmas again!
—Launce Lee.

MERRY XMAS

"DEAD MAN'S FIND"

BY M. QUAD.

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It was along in November that Tom and I discovered "indications" at a spot in the Pinyon mountains of Nevada and started a drift. We didn't intend to put in more than a week's work—just enough to develop the "find" and load up with specimens for assay—but after four or five days Tom was taken sick. Winter was already at hand, with a foot of snow on the ground.

If you have never been among the western mountains, I may tell you that at about the middle of December, after winter has seemingly shut down, there comes what is called a "chinook"—a warm wind off the Pacific—which melts the snow and stands the season off for a week, as it were. We had calculated to take advantage of this break to get out of the mountains, but fate willed it otherwise. Tom was a New Englander, rough and rugged. He hadn't been sick a day since he could remember, and his sudden breakdown was a complete surprise to both of us. He was attacked late in the afternoon with a violent twitching of his muscles, and by midnight was in a profound stupor, which lasted with but few intermissions until the end.

I knew that he was in a dangerous condition, but I could not leave him, helpless as he was, and make my way down into the valley for help, nor could I take him down in his weak and helpless state there was but one thing to do, and that was to get a shelter ready and take the best care of him possible. I found a sheltered spot and in a day and

I MOISTENED HIS LIPS.

a half had knocked together a pretty comfortable shanty. Then I gathered a great heap of firewood and was as ready as I could be for a change of weather. For some days Tom neither grew better nor worse. When I insisted on it, he would take a bit of rabbit soup, but his appetite was gone, and he lay for the most part in a deep stupor, neither speaking nor moving.

For three years we had knocked about the Silver State together in hopes of a "find." It had been a hard life and a rough one. We were more often hungry than not, and up to the time of Tom's illness we had found nothing of any consequence, but now—well, if indications amounted to anything, we had struck it rich, and our tens of thousands were right in sight. It seemed doubly hard for Tom to be bowled over just at this time and harder still to know that the chances were all against him. The only hope I had was that his robust constitution would pull him through this mysterious illness, but as he lost strength and grew weaker day by day even this hope died away.

The "chinook" lasted nine days. It seemed as if summer had come back. I nursed Tom, gathered a lot more wood, made the shanty more comfortable and dug a grave for Tom on a knoll 30 feet back of the cabin. If he pulled through, he would never know it; if he died, I could not leave his body above ground to be eaten by the wild beasts. He had hardly spoken since his illness, his mental faculties seeming to be benumbed, and I was therefore greatly surprised when I came in from my grave digging to find him looking better than for days before. I took it as a sign that he had passed the crisis and would now mend, and I was trying to cheer him up when he said:

"Sam, I heard you at work. You have done right. You know you could have depended on me to do the same."

"Why, Tom, old man, you are much better today! You are surely going to pull through! I was digging a bit to run the water off if it came on to rain."

But he was not deceived. After a bit he told me of his old mother and a sister in the east and asked that his share of the find might be sent them in case things turned out right. That night the "chinook" vanished as swiftly as a shadow moves, and winter came howling down on us. It was the 20th of December. Before morning it was far below zero, and a heavy snowstorm was raging, and Tom had relapsed into his former lethargic state. I was in for it now for sure—snowed up on the mountains with a dying man for companion. From the morning of the 20th to the afternoon of the 24th the man never uttered a word; sometimes he would open his eyes as I moistened his lips or forced a little soup down his throat, but he neither knew nor saw me. I knew by the look of his eyes that he was stone blind. About 3 o'clock on the afternoon of the date given, as I returned from the spring with a kettle of water, Tom quietly asked:

"Sam, is it near Christmas day?"

"Within a few hours."

"And you have got the grave ready?"

"Why, man, you won't need a grave for years to come. Come, now, I want to try you with a bite to eat, and I'll warrant you'll feel better for it."

But before I could get around to it he had again become unconscious, and the next and the last time I heard his voice was late that night; I don't know but it was Christmas morn, for it was midnight or after when he moved an arm and broke my sleep. By this time I had of course given up all hope and realized

"YOU WILL GET WELL."

that it was only a question of a few hours more. His long fast had reduced him to a mere skeleton, and during the last two days I could hardly get the beating of his pulse or heart. By the time I was awake, he said:

"Sam, where are you? I cannot see!"

I took his hands in mine and bent over him as I said:

"Here I am, old fellow. Do you feel better?"

"I'm most gone, Sam! And it's Christmas day, ain't it?"

"Yes," I answered, greatly surprised that he had kept the run of time so accurately. "But you are not going, Tom; you are better!"

"Christmas day in the old home, Sam!" he went on. "It is years since I was there. They'll remember me and speak of me, though—father and me! Father's grave is there, near the old home. Mine they will never see!"

"But Tom, Tom, you are better. You will get well!" I cried, as I lighted a candle and bent over him to lift his head.

"No, Sam. I've been dreaming, dreaming of my mother and sister—of father—of the old home—of— Good-by, Sam! I know you dug the grave days ago! Mark it, Sam. Mark it so that mother may know it if she ever— Mother! Moth"——

And it was all over with poor Tom. I sat beside him till the day came, the day of prayer and feasting and rejoicing among millions, and then I wrapped him in his blankets and carried him out and gave him burial and uttered the prayer which I knew was on his mother's lips, and shed the tears which I felt were welling up as she thought of the absent one. He asked me to mark his grave. I did so, and then I waited for weeks before I could get down into the valley. The next summer when the snow had melted away from the mountains I went back to the lonely shanty with laborers enough to develop the mine, which we called "Dead Man's Find," and before another Christmas day his mother sat by his grave while I told her the story of his illness and how her name had been the last on his lips on that dark Christmas morning when his soul went out into the great unknown

Mrs. Brown—That's a nice turkey, but I expected you'd have brought something to wash it down with.

Brown—My dear, that's a raffle turkey, and he's been washed down already.

"A snake in the grass" is all the more dangerous from being unsuspected. So are many of the blood medicines offered the public. To avoid all risk, ask your druggist for ayer's Sarsaparilla, and also for Ayers Almanac, which is just out for the new year.

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